

Visalia Unified School District shifts funds to save \$2.8m

BY GERALD CARROLL • gcarroll@visalia.gannett.com • March 30, 2010

Visalia Unified School District trustees have approved a plan to open up formerly targeted funding for general use, a move expected to add \$2.8 million to the district's general fund.

Funds from 13 existing programs will be garnished, said Christine Statton, chief financial officer for the district.

The move, approved by trustees March 23, still leaves the district with a \$7.6 million deficit for the coming fiscal year, Statton said. Deeper cuts might have to be made in 2011-12 if the state's economic picture deteriorates further, she said.

School districts statewide are taking advantage of changes in state guidelines that allow them to squeeze more from each dollar, Statton said.

Sacrifices for some programs are necessary to avoid teacher layoffs and other extreme measures, she said.

Among the Visalia Unified programs affected by the cash shift:

- An instructional-materials block grant will see half of its \$1.5 million total siphoned off into the general fund.
- Adult education will lose \$220,000 of its \$3.7 million budget.

- Cal-SAFE, a Sequoia High School program that assists pregnant students and those with children, stands to lose \$270,000. Statton said \$190,000 will remain for now. Other programs will miss out on a relatively small percentage of their funding, records show. David Christopher, a Visalia resident and advocate of the Cal-SAFE program, said he hopes the cuts will be revisited. Cuts should be made evenly, stakeholders said last week at a meeting of residents and teachers at Mt. Whitney High School.

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